



Students at Happy Valley Elementary use scaffolds to complete mural with the help of artist Yermo Aranda. The eagle, seen at the right side of the mural, is one of Aranda's favorite images.

Artist leaves strong impression on Happy Valley

Editor's Note: This story was written by Happy Valley fifth graders Alex Poore, Alexa Davis, Jonathan Brothers, Mayra Daley, Nathan Caughman, and Ryan Torchlo, and edited by teacher Sally Munro.

This year's artist in residence at Happy Valley School is Yermo Aranda. Yermo is an artist who works with children, youth, and adults to create murals. He has several murals in this area, including the one just below the 41st Avenue Drive-In Theater visible from Highway 1, and the one in Felton.

Many schools in Santa Cruz County have created murals with help from Yermo, and this spring, all children from first through sixth grade worked together to paint the incredible mural now on the wall of the Happy Valley computer lab.

The mural moves from left to right, starting with images from the past and moving into the present using ideas drawn from talking with children in each class.

MAKING THE GRADE ISSUES THAT AFFECT TODAY'S TEENS

the more images you can find.

The story of how Yermo got started on mural design is an interesting one. Yermo did not want to be an artist when he was a kid because he did not know what an artist was, but he loved to draw. In second grade he won a blue ribbon for a drawing and realized that he had a special talent. Yermo's father and grandfather were both artists and his family made jewelry and musical instruments. At first, Yermo's father did try to get him to play an instrument such as the guitar, violin, or accordion. However, when he saw Yermo's paintings and drawings, he gave him lots of art materials and encouraged him to draw.

Yermo was a student at San Diego State, majoring in fine arts, when he met a muralist from Mexico who wanted to do a mural at San Diego State. Yermo became his assistant and has been working on murals ever since.

Yermo is not sure how many murals he has painted, but he has an estimate of somewhere between 50 and 60. The biggest mural he painted was 16 feet high and 46 feet long. He did another one 180 feet long and 7 feet high, which is at the San Diego Cultural Center in Balboa Park.

In many of Yermo's murals, including the one at Happy Valley, he mixes images from the past with images of the present. He especially likes using images from ancient Mexico.

Yermo's favorite mural is the one he did in Felton with kids from the juvenile facility. He likes it because it deals with a lot of wildlife and images from countries all around the world, like India, Yugoslavia, Africa, and Australia.

Yermo finds that the hardest part of completing a mural is letting go of it. He spent 13 years on one of his murals, and he could still find more details to add to it!

Yermo's favorite image is the eagle because he thinks that it represents the spirit. Every mural Yermo paints has an eagle on it somewhere.

"If it doesn't have spirit, then what's the point?"

Painting murals is a very special time for Yermo because he gets to know individual kids and see them accomplish things they didn't think they could do.

When working with so many children, the biggest challenge for Yermo is communication. If he doesn't communicate clearly, the mural could turn out a disaster.

Although Yermo also enjoys lithography (sketching into stone), pottery, and silver work, painting murals is his favorite form of art because it allows him to meet and work with so many interesting people.